

**OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting, 5-6 December 2013, Kiev.**  
**Statement by H.E. Mr. Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Icelandic Minister  
for Foreign Affairs**

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me first join other speakers in thanking the Government of Ukraine for hosting this Ministerial and the citizens of Kiev for their hospitality. I also want to express my gratitude to the Chairmanship and praise their tireless commitment to finding common ground between the 57 participating States.

Mr. Chairman,

Finding a common ground at home is equally important. I would like to join other speakers in urging our hosts to abide by the very principles and commitments that are the backbone of our work within the OSCE, in particular the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. We urge the government and the opposition to engage in a dialogue and launch a reform process.

Mr. Chairman,

In this context allow me to look back and reflect briefly on the initial purpose of our organization. Despite all differences, participating States in Helsinki 1975 came gradually to the common understanding that lasting peace and security could only be achieved through the respect for fundamental freedoms, human rights and democracy, through sustainable economic and environmental policies, and through close cooperation on disarmament, security and defense matters.

This concept of “comprehensive security” originated here in the OSCE and is still what makes our organization unique. We certainly did not agree on everything back then, just as we do not agree on everything today. Still, our successes are far more numerous than our failures.

Mr. Chairman,

This brings me to the outcome of our meeting. Iceland underlines the importance of reaching concrete results in all three dimensions.

Iceland was one of the chairs of the Forum for Security Co-operation in 2011 and has chaired the Open Skies Consultative Commission in the last four months. We welcome all steps that contribute to the better functioning of our security and disarmament agreements.

Allow me also to express my satisfaction with OSCE's decision to send an election support team to Afghanistan. The OSCE can share expertise and experience through its presence in Central Asia, and contribute positively to the stability and security in the region.

On environmental affairs and energy, Iceland highlights the role of geothermal utilization. As Europe increases the use of renewable energy resources, Iceland remains ready to share experience in this area.

We need to make further progress within the Human Dimension.

Having said that, Iceland believes that compromises cannot be made on existing commitments where fundamental freedoms and human rights are at stake. Fundamental freedoms and human rights are non-negotiable.

Mr. Chairman

The OSCE's repeated failure to adopt a decision on the protection of journalists is disappointing. The alarming trends regarding freedom of the media and the number of attacks on journalists should encourage us to do more to ensure the safety of journalists.

Here, I would like to commend the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, as well as the other OSCE's institutions and representatives, ODIHR in particular.

These bodies work tirelessly on crucial subjects of concern to us all, such as the disturbing rise of intolerance, xenophobia and hate speech, and on trafficking in human beings.

Finally, I cannot conclude on the human dimension without voicing Iceland's regret that plans for an Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 did not materialize. It is disappointing that states that lend their support to this important resolution at the UN have not yet been able to do so at the OSCE.

Mr. Chairman,

Iceland strongly supports the Helsinki+40 process and sees in it an opportunity to strengthen our work.

We should also make use of it to reaffirm existing commitments and ensure their implementation. Although the Helsinki+40 is generally on a good track, we believe it would benefit from stronger commitment to be successful.

The OSCE cooperation is indeed work in progress and it requires patience. In times of diverging views it may be, at the end of the day, the small steps that lead to great leaps.

Allow me, as a final word, to reiterate my countries' gratitude to the outgoing Ukrainian Chairmanship and reassure the incoming Chair of Iceland's support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.